

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 23, 2011

Lisa P. Jackson  
Administrator  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
Ariel Rios Building  
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20460

Thomas R. Frieden, MD, MPH  
Director  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
Administrator  
Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry  
Clifton Building, Mailstop D14  
Atlanta, GA 30329

Dear Administrator Jackson and Director Frieden:

As the federal agencies primarily responsible for investigating and responding to suspected disease clusters, I write to ask for additional assistance and attention with respect to the childhood cancer cluster in Clyde, Ohio. I also write to request more information about efforts already underway by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) with respect to this health emergency in Northwest Ohio.

The National Center for Environmental Health at the CDC defines a cancer cluster as a "greater-than-expected number of cancer cases that occurs within a group of people in a geographic area over a defined period of time." Since 1996, at least 37 children within a 12-mile wide circle have been diagnosed with brain and central nervous system tumors, lymphoma, leukemia, and other forms of cancer. Tragically, four of these children have passed away. When eight children in or near Clyde were diagnosed with cancer between 2002 and 2006 – state health experts acknowledged that this number was approximately four times what could be considered normal.

It is my understanding that the CDC and the EPA have provided a certain amount of oversight and expertise to the state agencies primarily responsible for investigating the cancer cluster in Clyde. After years of challenging and complex work at the state level – involving the Ohio Department of Health (ODH), the Sandusky County Health Department (SCHD), and the Ohio EPA – I believe it is imperative that our nation's federal agencies, with their additional resources, begin to play a larger role.

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For years, the Ohio EPA, ODH, and SCHD have worked diligently together to meet with families of children affected by cancer, discuss environmental conditions in the region, and to try and determine whether any similarities exist in terms of exposure or origin. In addition, the Ohio EPA has conducted air monitoring throughout the region, evaluated drinking water quality, evaluated area companies' compliance with environmental laws, and scoured existing information looking for unusual environmental conditions in the region. To date, despite these considerable efforts, Ohio's state agencies have been unable to determine why the children of Clyde, Ohio are at an increased risk of getting cancer.

These children, and these families, deserve answers.

According to information from the EPA website, the CDC and other federal agencies are only called in to further assist with cancer cluster investigations when there is a "special situation." With at least 37 children diagnosed with cancer, four children dead, and an entire community searching for answers, I would ask the EPA and CDC to consider the Clyde cancer cluster a "special situation."

If the EPA and the CDC agreed to increase federal involvement in trying to determine the cause for high rates of childhood cancer in Clyde, what type of assistance would this entail? What, if any, other federal resources are available to help our state in this matter? Finally, please provide details as to the level of assistance that the EPA and the CDC have already provided to the state of Ohio to help investigate potential causes for these increased incidences of childhood cancer in and around Clyde.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. I look forward to working with both the EPA and the CDC in the hopes of providing answers to the children and families of Clyde, Ohio.

Sincerely,



Sherrod Brown  
United States Senator

CC: Theodore E. Wymyslo, MD, Director, Ohio Department of Health  
Scott J. Nally, Director, Ohio Environmental Protection Agency  
David G. Pollick, Health Commissioner, Sandusky County Health Department